

Joint Statement

On

Strengthening of relations between Iceland and Japan

The Foreign Minister of Iceland H.E. Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson visited Japan from 9th to 13th of November 2014, as a guest of H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. They held a foreign ministers' meeting on the 10th of November in Tokyo.

The Ministers reviewed the strong and long-standing bilateral relations between the two countries, bearing in mind the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, which will be celebrated in 2016. In particular, they were pleased to note the taking of office of the first residing Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Iceland this year.

The Ministers discussed concrete measures for further strengthening Japanese-Icelandic relations in political, economic, scientific, cultural, and other fields, recognizing that Iceland and Japan have shared fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as various commonalities such as respect for nature, dietary culture and other life-styles. Through their discussion, the Ministers identified common interests in bilateral, regional, multilateral and global issues to be addressed jointly.

To enhance further cooperation between the two countries the Ministers decided to further strengthen cooperation on the following elements:

1. Political Dialogue

The Ministers decided to strengthen political cooperation by promoting regular meetings and dialogues, including by enhancing friendly exchanges between the governments and legislative bodies, as well as local authorities in various forms, and meetings in the margins of international and regional meetings.

2. Strengthening of International and Multilateral Cooperation

The Ministers decided to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the Arctic issues, disaster risk reduction and management, marine living resource management and disarmament and non-proliferation in multilateral and regional fora, through especially the United Nations (UN), Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) cooperation, and other multilateral mechanisms.

The Ministers recognized the importance of UN reform, with a particular emphasis on the Security Council, and emphasized the necessity to improve its effectiveness, transparency and representativeness in order to reflect the reality of today's international community and in the light of the 70th anniversary of the UN in 2015. In this context the Ministers will enhance cooperation with a view to achieving concrete outcomes in 2015.

The Ministers shared the view that environmental changes in the Arctic provide new opportunities and pose challenges for the international community, including Iceland and Japan, and that any action to be taken in the Arctic needs to be based on the rule of law. The Ministers also stressed the importance of environmental protection, sustainable development and use of natural resources, including energy and fishery, and human rights of indigenous people. The Ministers expressed their commitment to mobilize their political will, business opportunities and academic resources to promote these elements.

The Ministers also shared the recognition that the seas and oceans need to be open, free and secure. They reaffirmed that maritime order based on the rule of law must be maintained and that common principles, such as the freedoms and safety of navigation in and overflight over the high seas, must be adhered to. The Ministers decided on the paramount importance of refraining from the use or threat of force and of resolving disputes through peaceful means in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

3. Trade and Investment

The Ministers underlined the importance of the private sector's activities and presumed that partnerships between the respective business communities of the two countries will be strengthened through cooperation between the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Promote Iceland.

The Ministers took note of the extended networks of free trade agreements and shared the view that it is important to improve business environment by facilitating cross-border movement of goods, services and investment. In this context, Iceland emphasized the importance of a free trade agreement which would encompass Iceland to stimulate export-driven growth between the two countries.

The Ministers decided to continue discussions to assess the need for strengthening relationships in the fields of trade and investment, tax and aviation between the two countries, and to explore ways to prepare further work on improvement of the current trade and business environment.

4. Education, Culture, People to People Exchange

The Ministers welcomed long-standing cooperation in the field of culture and education, especially in higher education with exchanges of students and researchers and confirmed their

commitment to further strengthen cooperation in this field. Recognizing the importance of people-to-people exchanges to deepen mutual understanding, the Ministers encouraged bilateral or multilateral exchange arrangements between their relevant educational institutions and welcomed the on-going success of the Japanese Monbukagakusho scholarship system in strengthening the bond between the two countries. The Ministers also expressed their will to promote cooperation in the field of research and development on issues of mutual interest, such as the Arctic issues and the risk reduction of volcanic disasters.

Acknowledging that Japanese language education programs run by the Japan Foundation have been largely contributing to Japanese language learning in Iceland and that Japanese language is one of the top foreign languages taught in the University of Iceland, the Ministers encouraged continued support for promoting Japanese language learning in higher education in Iceland.

The Ministers also welcomed that the partnership between universities of the two countries is expanding and that Japanese students are studying Icelandic culture and language at these Japanese universities.

Underlining their willingness to further develop cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges in the field of sport, culture and tourism between the two countries, the Ministers encouraged dialogues among relevant institutions and agencies to enhance exchange and cooperation in these fields.

The Ministers underlined the importance to promote mobility, cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges among the youth of the countries, and decided to study the possibility of starting negotiations on a working holiday framework.

5. Management of Marine Living Resources

Recognizing that Iceland and Japan are dependent on sustainable use of all marine living resources and are both active within international organizations and agencies that address sustainable use and protection of marine living resources, the Ministers confirmed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation in maritime affairs, both on a bilateral basis as well as within a multilateral framework. In particular, the Ministers confirmed their views that whale resources can be utilized in a sustainable manner in accordance with international law and scientific evidence. Furthermore, the Ministers shared the view that whaling is deeply rooted in the cultures of both countries and expressed interest to promote recognition for this in the international community.

6. Disaster Risk Reduction

Iceland and Japan being volcanic countries, the Ministers decided to strengthen their cooperation in risk reduction and relief in case of volcanic disasters. The Ministers

encouraged dialogues between relevant ministries and authorities of both countries to establish cooperation in order to share knowledge, best practices and technological developments.

The Ministers decided to further explore possibilities of cooperation in the field of risk reduction in case of other natural disasters, as well as promotion and facilitation of networks and partnerships on bilateral basis and in multilateral frameworks. In this regard, the Ministers affirmed active participation in and close cooperation for the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai in March 2015, which will offer a good opportunity to enhance cooperation in this field.

7. Women's Participation in Society

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women at both domestic and international levels, and expressed their appreciation for each other's efforts in this regard. Minister Kishida informed about the vision of Prime Minister Abe, named "a society in which all women shine" and about the event held on September 12 through 14, the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo (WAW! Tokyo 2014). The Ministers shared the importance of and the willingness to promote the realization of "a society in which women shine" that will enhance women's active role and participation in every field of society, especially in the labor market as the key to further economic growth. The Ministers encouraged relevant stakeholders and agencies in both countries to enhance cooperation in this regard by exchanging experiences and best practices.

8. Environment, Climate Change, Green Technology and Geothermal Energy

The Ministers noted the importance of research and innovation to tackle climate change and encouraged closer scientific research cooperation between respective academe and research institutions of the two countries.

The Ministers emphasized the increased importance of green technology for energy savings and energy efficiency in broad areas of activities.

Recognizing the crucial role of the private sector to reduce energy consumption and promote renewable energy in the context of making plans for a suitable domestic energy mix, the Ministers encouraged private sectors of both countries to share best practices with the intention of creating mutual business opportunities.

Recalling the "Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the Japanese Bipartisan Coalition of Legislators for Promoting Geothermal Power Generation in the area of geothermal energy" signed in 2012, the Ministers affirmed their continued efforts to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of geothermal energy.

Iceland and Japan are among world leaders in geothermal technologies and have cooperated for decades in this field. Recognizing growing global interest for geothermal deployment, the Ministers underlined their willingness to strengthen this cooperation in third countries, such as East Africa, by exchange of information. The Ministers shared the view that strengthening the global awareness of the role of geothermal power generation as a clean energy source is important and welcomed initiatives of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to establish the Global Geothermal Alliance and the Africa Clean Energy Corridor.